



1. Project Data

Project ID P164293	Project Name Burkina Faso Higher Educ Support Project
Country Burkina Faso	Practice Area(Lead) Education

L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-D3570	Closing Date (Original) 30-Sep-2023	Total Project Cost (USD) 66,828,016.67
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Bank Approval Date 10-Jul-2018	Closing Date (Actual) 31-Mar-2025
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	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	70,000,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	66,404,398.00	0.00
Actual	66,828,016.67	0.00

Prepared by Koen Martijn Geven	Reviewed by Salim J. Habayeb	ICR Review Coordinator Susan Ann Caceres	Group IEGHC (Unit 2)
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO) of the Burkina Fast Higher Education Support project (*Projet d'Appui à l'Enseignement Supérieur, PAES*) was to strengthen higher education institutions to increase access and deliver quality education in priority subject areas. 'Priority Subject Areas' means the subject programs grouped in areas as follows: Area 1 - agriculture, agribusiness, and logistics; Area 2 - health sciences; Area 3 - environmental education; and Area 4 - promoting teacher training in teaching mathematics



and sciences in accordance with modern practices. The PDO statement in the PAD and the Financing Agreement (Grant number D357BF, August 21, 2018) are the same.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1. Enhancing Access to Higher Education: Establishment of the Virtual University of Burkina Faso (UVBF) (original allocation - IDA US\$23.5 million equivalent; actual expenditure - US\$22.8 million equivalent). The objective of Component 1 was to diversify higher education delivery models and transform access to quality and innovative higher education in line with the priorities and transformation needs of the economy by supporting the establishment of an autonomous UVBF in Ouagadougou. This was to be achieved through DLI 2: Establishment and operation of the UVBF. The UVBF was to be an autonomous institution with its own budget and managed by an independent board of directors with a mix of public and private sector members. The mandate of the UVBF was to develop new programs; adapt and adopt existing open-source content or commercial packages in French, Arabic, and English languages for young people; and promote teacher training in modern practices of math and sciences teaching. The aim was to provide higher-quality and more relevant education and training at the tertiary level with ICT. This support, in the form of technical expertise, equipment, and/or supply of international capacity, was to help develop the UVBF into a regional partner in the education community. The component also provided support to the Burkina Faso National Research and Education Network (FasoREN)

Component 2. Strengthening Higher Education Institutions and Supporting Innovations (original allocation - IDA US\$40.5 million equivalent; actual expenditure - US\$39.8 million equivalent). The objective of Component 2 was to improve the quality and increase the relevance of priority programs by supporting the implementation of a set of improved labor market-oriented academic programs and was to be measured through DLI 1: Increased number of students in priority subject areas.

- **Subcomponent 2.1: Support a Competitive Grants Program.** The objective of this subcomponent was to provide grants to foster the development and implementation of quality improvement subprojects in priority subject areas in the project-selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This subcomponent was supported by DLI 3: Implementing Window A competitive funding.
- **Subcomponent 2.2: Support Faculty Development in HEIs.** This subcomponent was to provide financing to enable the selected HEIs cluster to (a) pay for professional development opportunities for their academic staff; (b) promote a visiting scholars' program; (c) foster faculty exchanges nationally, intra-regionally, and internationally; and (d) train academic staff in new pedagogical methods in mathematics and science. The subcomponent also supported efforts to increase the higher education teaching body locally through *les écoles doctorales*, which are bodies within public universities and HEIs that provide research-oriented doctoral training and are authorized to confer doctorates in specific subject areas. It also supported the expansion of courses of study in priority



subjects by identifying, selecting, and recruiting qualified international teachers and by providing scholarships to doctoral students in those subject areas.

- **Subcomponent 2.3: Strengthening Quality Assurance in HEIs.** The objective of this subcomponent was to build the capacity of the HEIs to manage internal quality assurance and was supported by DLI 4: Strengthening quality assurance in HEIs: Number of HEIs with Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAUs).
- **Subcomponent 2.4: Strengthening the Management Capacity of HEIs.** The objective of the subcomponent was to strengthen the management capacity of the HEIs and was supported by DLI 6: External revenue generation: Regulatory framework and matching grant based on four DLRs.

Component 3: Project Coordination, Management, and Implementation Activities (original allocation - IDA US\$3.0 million equivalent; actual expenditure - US\$4.1 million equivalent). The objective of Component 3 was twofold—to strengthen the governance and management of higher education and the capacity of the Permanent Secretariat of the National Plan for the Development of Higher Education (*Plan National d'Action de Développement de l'Enseignement Supérieur*, PNADES) to undertake the tasks required to implement the project and to hire an independent verification agent (IVA) for DLI achievement. Achievement of Component 3 and the overall project targets was supported by DLI 5: Functioning of Project Management Information System: Management Information System (MIS) developed and operational.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Project cost. The project was an IDA grant of SDR 48.7 million (US\$ 70 million equivalent). The project disbursed 66.7 million (95% of the total). There was no counterpart funding.

Parallel investment through Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) Impact project. In parallel to the implementation of PAES, the government of Burkina Faso was also implementing the regional ACE Impact II project (P164546, effectiveness August 2019, closed June 2025), which aimed to improve quality, quantity and development impact of postgraduate education in selected universities through regional specialization and collaboration. Whereas PAES was focused on sector-wide reforms, ACE Impact II supported four centers of excellence in Burkina Faso, namely Training and Research in Water Science and Technology, Energy and the Environment in West and Central Africa (CEA-2iE), Training, Research and Expertise in Drug Sciences (CFOREM), Bio-technological Innovation for the Elimination of Vector- Borne Diseases (CEA-ITECH-MTV) and 2iE College of Engineering (2iE).

Key dates. The project was approved on 10 July 2018, and was declared effective on 19 December, 2018. The project closed on 31 March 2025. The project was restructured twice, in September 2023 (after the mid-term review), and on October 2024. The project closing was extended twice: the first time by 12 months from the original closing date of September 2023 until September 2024, and the second time by 6 months until March 2025.

Under the 2023 restructuring, the closing date of the project was extended by 12 months because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with political instability which resulted in implementation delays, and to continue the establishment of Performance-Based Contracts conferring increased autonomy for HEIs, supporting PhD students to increase the critical mass of researchers and professors date, the



digitization efforts to respond to the increasing demand for higher education, and to address the continued challenge of access to quality higher education programs (Project Paper, Report No. RES41946).

Under the 2024 restructuring, the extension of the closing date was necessary to allow the completion of key activities, including (a) the ongoing construction of two ODS in Ouagadougou; (b) the ongoing rehabilitation of the central library of the University of Joseph ki Zerbo (UJKZ); and (c) the planned construction of a nursery (crèche) at UJKZ (Project Paper, Report No. RES00444).

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

At the time of appraisal, Burkina Faso was experiencing a fast-expanding secondary education system, which put pressure on the tertiary education system to expand and adjust in turn to changing labor market demands. Prospects of a demographic dividend led the country to prioritize the improvement of the supply of higher education, while gearing demand side interventions towards better choices for fields of study that the country needed for its development. Quality issues played a central role, given that enrollments are expected to nearly quadruple in the private sector and double in the public sector between 2015/16 and 2025. Moreover, girls' enrollment in tertiary education remained low at 37.2 percent in 2015. Academic programs also were not aligned with the country's development needs. In terms of demand, the need for both skilled and unskilled labor was high, with firms reporting that they faced recruitment difficulties and apprenticeship availability was limited.

The project remains relevant to the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) FY18-22 (report no. 123712 – BF), which is the latest CPF for Burkina Faso. Specifically, the project is relevant to 'Focus Area 2: Invest in human capital and social protection systems' and 'Objective 2.1: Support inclusive, high-quality education and skills development'. This objective includes support to skills development and higher education to prepare youth for the labor market. Support to tertiary education also plays an important role in the Performance and Learning Review of the Country Partnership Framework (Report number 1660809) for Burkina Faso for FY18–FY24. The project was the first World Bank-supported operation in the higher education sector in Burkina Faso (see section on Quality-at-Entry).

At country level, the project also remained relevant to the Government's 'Presidential Initiative for Quality Education for All' launched in 2024, setting a comprehensive agenda for education reform, emphasizing infrastructure development, teacher training, and inclusive education for marginalized groups. In addition, it remains strongly with the Government's Vocational Training Sector Plan (ETSP) 2017–2030 and National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES II) (2021–2025), particularly its strategic Axis 3 'Consolidating the Development of Human Capital and National Solidarity', which includes Strategic Objective 3.2, 'increasing the supply and improving the quality of education, higher education, and training in line with the needs of the economy'.

Rating

High



4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

Increase access in priority subject areas

Rationale

Rationale. PAES aimed to support the creation of the UVBF to provide distance education at scale, improve digital connectivity and capacity in new programs that were relevant to the labor market. In the broader higher education sector, the project also aimed to expand supply by developing new programs in priority areas and by procuring and distributing teaching materials. Improved teacher recruitment, infrastructure investments and performance contracts between the universities and MESRI also supported improved completion by students of their first year in tertiary education.

Outputs:

- UVBF was established and operational. UVBF is now an autonomous university directly connected to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (*Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation*, MESRI) with its own budget and independent board.
- UVBF now offers 12 different courses—6 at the undergraduate level, 5 at the masters' level, and 1 certification program in pedagogy - design and delivery of e-learning programs.
- E-learning platforms were installed for the benefit of all public universities (<https://www.education.gov.bf>)
- Equipment was acquired for various training programs, which included virtual laboratory equipment, computer equipment, and recording studios/equipment.
- The UVBF produced video clips and purchased several courses in the form of transfer rights.
- 36,459 students received a subsidized computer, with students paying 30% of the purchase price.
- 24 sites were covered with wi-fi in 231 functional buildings within the HEIs across the country. In addition, 234,754 users have already used the HEI connectivity with an average daily flow of between 3,000 and 4,000 users.
- The library at the Université Joseph Ki-Zerbo (UJKZ) was upgraded from 300 seats to 620 seats through rehabilitation and provision of equipment and furniture.
- A childcare facility with 50 places for student mothers was created at the UJKZ
- 30 laboratories, 9 amphitheatres were rehabilitated
- The project built 20 new classrooms, 64 new study areas, and 12 workshops for programs;
- Multimedia equipment, laboratory equipment, and computer equipment were procured
- Solar energy systems were procured
- 9 boreholes were drilled to provide water to the higher education institutions and a grove with seedlings was developed at University of Thomas Sankara in Ouagadougou.
- 261,643 additional undergraduate higher education students enrolled in programs funded by the Project (target: 13,500). 31.8% of additional students were female (target: 35%). This intermediate target was achieved, but the female sub-target was not achieved. Note from IEG: In the ICR, this



objective is discussed under Objective 2. It is understood that certain indicators may be associated with more than one objective. This ICRR included the indicator in the assessment of Objective 1, as it was more closely associated with access aspects.

Outcomes:

- 23,000 undergraduate students were enrolled in priority subject areas funded by the project (target: 3,891), which was substantially above the target of. 33% of these students were female (target: 25%). Targets for the project were set conservatively, because of a lack of quality data at project design, and because of the security situation in Burkina Faso (IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025).
- The percentage of students who have successfully completed the first-year program at the HEIs financed by the project went up from 0 at baseline to 61.4 percent (target: 75 percent). For female students, it went up from 0 to 61.7 percent (target: 30 percent). The target was not achieved, although the sub-target for female students was achieved. It should be noted that the target for female student completion was set conservatively (due to continuing challenges with female enrollment in priority subjects, as well as data availability at project design, the project implemented several measures that contributed to high female completion rates, such as the childcare facility, provision of laptops, which allowed female students more flexibility to participate in coursework and inclusion of support for female students in performance based contracts, IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025). Note from IEG: It is understood that certain indicators may be associated with more than one objective, but while the ICR's efficacy section considered this indicator to be associated with Objective 2 on quality, the ICR (para 9) classified it as an indicator of access. This ICRR included the indicator in the assessment of Objective 1, as it was more closely associated with access aspects.

The rating for this objective is **Substantial**. The project's enrollment targets were exceeded, and the creation of the UVBF led to capacity expansion in the system, while also expanding the digital service offer to students. The target for first-year completion was not achieved, although the female sub-target for female students was exceeded (the resulting gender parity in first year completions is notable even though the sub-target was perhaps set too conservatively). While enrollment targets could have been adjusted upwards during restructuring due to the project extension, the project nevertheless had a large increase in enrollments.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

Deliver quality education in priority subject areas

Rationale

Rationale: The project aimed improve quality by supporting the government to draw up performance-based contracts with universities for quality improvements, providing faculty development grants, establishing



internal quality assurance units and supporting improvements in university management. Performance contracts included strategic plans, and modernization to curricula, academic partnerships, faculty development and research and teaching infrastructure. At UVBF, the project also supported the development of programs in priority subjects and new teaching materials.

Outputs:

- 10 Performance Based Contracts were signed between universities and MESRI, leading to a culture of results-based management.
- 84% of institutions achieved annual milestones specified in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) and the performance contract (target: 80%). This target was achieved.
- 8 HEIs had IQAUs (target: 7). This target was achieved.
- US\$ 49.03 million in external revenue was raised (target: US\$ 1.25 million). This target was achieved.
- 300 doctoral students received a scholarship (target: 300). This target was achieved.

Outcomes:

- 1,133 teachers were recruited (target: 600), and in total, 2,343 teachers were recruited or trained (target: 1,620). This target was achieved. However, there was no information regarding the assessment of training, notably its impact on quality aspects.
- 220,128 students benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning (target: 140,000). 87,666 female students (39%) benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning (target: 47,000 or 34%). This target was achieved.
- There are also important efficiency gains from the project (ICR, para 37). The introduction of DLIs — linking 38 percent of resources to results—enhanced cost-effectiveness, strengthened accountability, and improved the responsiveness of the higher education sector. Investments in renovated facilities and digitalization further boosted efficiency, while large-scale teacher training (2,343 teachers trained, representing 72 percent of the workforce) and reinforced quality assurance mechanisms increased faculty productivity. At the same time, support for PhD students helped build long-term research capacity and positioned universities to play a greater role in driving innovation and contributing to the knowledge economy.

The rating for this objective is **Substantial**. There was insufficient outcome evidence provided by the ICR to support full achievement. The project recruited and trained a substantial number of teachers, which is likely to contribute to quality improvement. The project also raised substantial revenue for universities, while also increasing overall efficiency of the higher education sector, both of which are expected to contribute to investments in quality. The project also contributed to a results-based culture in the universities, slightly exceeding target for internal quality assurance units and the (implementation of) performance-based contracts.

Rating
Substantial



OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

With a Substantial rating for each objective, the project has a Substantial rating for Efficacy.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

At completion, the economic internal rate of return (EIRR) is estimated at 31.27 percent—well above the 16.71 percent estimated at appraisal—demonstrating a marked improvement over initial expectation. The analysis highlights significant gains in the higher education sector across internal efficiency, external efficiency, and equity dimensions. The project also generates a robust net present value (NPV) of US\$73.15 million, further underscoring its effectiveness and long-term economic benefits.

The project’s economic gains were achieved through both efficiency and equity channels. On the extensive margin, project investments reduced dropout and repetition (as noted in Section 4), leading to a reduction in the unit cost of educating a student from US\$54,261 to US\$36,213. Project interventions also allowed students to complete their studies more quickly and entered the labor market earlier, extending their working life by about two years. On the intensive margin, the project improved worker productivity, shortened periods of employment (with the waiting period from first job reduced from 25.5 months in 2020 to 6-12 months by 2025, and entry level salaries improving from CAF 100.000 – 200.000 to CAF 150,000 – 250,000 in the same time period.

The project faced significant delays, however, leading to an extension of 18 months (not one year as noted in the ICR, para 40). These delays were caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the complexity of project design, the fluid security situation and the country’s regime change. The Covid-19 pandemic also likely affected student learning outcomes (and thus Objective 2 of the project) due to widespread school closures. The project did however disburse almost fully (97% by project closing).

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal	✓	16.71	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable



ICR Estimate	✓	31.27	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
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* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

Relevance of objectives was rated High, as objectives were fully aligned with the country and World Bank strategies. Efficacy was rated Substantial, as project objectives were almost fully achieved. Efficiency was also rated Substantial in view of high value for money, but with negative implementation aspects affecting overall efficiency. These findings are consistent with a satisfactory outcome rating.

a. Outcome Rating

Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

There is political and economic risk due to Burkina Faso’s security and fiscal context—marked by persistent insecurity and macro-fiscal pressures—could disrupt university operations. Additionally, there are technical and financial risks to sustaining project-supported systems (such as the UVBF, connectivity, and CampusFaso) will require reliable recurrent financing and institutional capacity. These risks are mitigated by the strong institutionalization of reforms (quality assurance units and frameworks), demonstrated own-revenue generation by universities, government commitment (including funding the UVBF and One Student/One Computer Program), and the operationalization of sector-wide information systems. Government ownership of the project remains strong, and risk to government ownership has been mitigated by embedding key reforms within MESRI’s operational structure, such as for the *CampusFaso* MIS system. Environment and Social risk remains Substantial at project closing. Stakeholder risk remains Moderate, and has been mitigated by providing the universities a key role in the management of their own resources, raising additional revenue and supporting results-based management. To mitigate technical and financial risk, the Government has requested World Bank support for a follow-on operation—ELEVATE Burkina, P509941—with delivery tentatively scheduled for FY27.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The strategic relevance of the project was high, and the project was well aligned to both the CPF and country objectives (as discussed in the relevance section). The project involved relevant technical experts, and was well aligned with global priorities in the higher education sector. The PAD covered poverty, gender aspects and social development aspects with the relevant amount of detail. Given that this was the first investment in the higher education sector in Burkina Faso, the project also included



detailed Financial Management (with a specific role for the Division of Administration and Finance of the Permanent Secretariat of the

The National Plan for the Development of Higher Education (PNADES) managed finances of the project. Similarly, the procurement division of PNADES was allocated procurement responsibility for the project. Procurement and financial management audits were carried out during appraisal, alongside a detailed implementation plan. The project entity for Education Access and Quality Project (P148062) helped to prepare the project thanks to its fiduciary experience with the World Bank. The PAD also included reference to four implementation manuals, which would be developed early in the implementation process.

Since the project marked the first World Bank investment in the higher education sector in Burkina Faso, the Bank developed a detailed technical analysis of the sector during preparation. The Bank team incorporated lessons from other education investments as well as from analytical work such as the study 'Burkina Faso: Post-primary Education Development'. Project preparation was also a consultative process with various stakeholders in the sector, such as faculty, staff, and students at the HEIs as well as the MESRI staff. Preparation also included planning for risk mitigation (particularly due to the political and security situation), incorporating design features that were appropriate to the risks (such as an emphasis on distance learning and revenue mobilization).

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Supervision missions were semiannual, staffed with education and fiduciary staff and consultants with the technical expertise needed. The project team was actively engaged in supporting the Government in its efforts to enhance the long-term capacity of the education system to produce new university graduates with priority skills and foster innovation within the higher education system to make it relevant to the needs of labor market. Supervision was focused on achieving the development outcomes of the project, but also supported resolution of implementation bottlenecks. Whenever implementation challenges arose, the World Bank team worked with the Government to find appropriate solutions that would not compromise the integrity of the design. The supervision teams consistently reported on FM, procurement, and safeguards progress during supervision missions and worked with the Directorate General for Sectoral Studies and Statistics (DGESS), universities, HEIs, and other implementation staff to build their capacity in these areas. As indicated above, safeguards compliance was monitored regularly. The missions also systematically documented project progress in aide memoires and ISRs, all of which kept the World Bank management informed of progress. Implementation Status Reports provided a high level of candor, although public versions of the ISRs lacked some detail about the challenges faced. Key to the project's achievements was the consistent supervision by the World Bank team in-country and strong ongoing sector-specific TA for the various implementation units. Factors that were not under World Bank control (such as the Covid-19 pandemic) and the regime change in the country were dealt with effectively during the two restructuring exercises that led the Bank to extend the project by 18 months.



Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The original PDO was clearly specified at appraisal and was not modified at the time of the two project restructurings (2023 and 2024). The TOC was sound, and the selection of indicators were appropriate. Both PDO level and intermediate indicators were clearly defined, time-bound and achievable. The M&E design was developed to monitor and report on progress toward meeting the targets of the PDO and intermediate indicators in the RF through regular routine monitoring and reporting by the DGESS/MESRI. With this design, data collection would contribute to the building of an MIS for the higher education sector. However, due to a lack of data at project entry, as well as the security situation in the country, targets for enrollment and for female first-year completion were set very conservatively (and overachieved during project life, IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025).

The data collected was also to be disaggregated by gender to track the female participants of the programs. The DGESS was responsible for data collection, validation, analysis, and dissemination. The project design also included the recruitment of an Independent Verification Authority that, once operational, would support the preparation and delivery of independent verification reports. Finally, the M&E design included the development and operationalization of the MIS to monitor the achievement of activities; track, measure, and address gender-based violence incidents; and monitor climate co-benefits of the project.

b. M&E Implementation

The selected performance indicators were tracked regularly, and the results framework was updated on time for implementation support missions including the mid-term review. The CampusFaso platform enabled regular and comprehensive monitoring of the higher education subsystem, and more specifically, at the project level, the use of the Kobo Toolbox18 (remote monitoring tool) and a monthly monitoring table of project activities allowed effective M&E. The system has been designed to measure progress on activities and outcomes and provide continuous feedback to improve performance. Data was generally found to be reliable and of good quality during supervision missions. Although the Government and the World Bank collected data to measure progress toward achievement of the PDO, consistency in reporting and systematic tracking of indicators faced some challenges. Because multiple sources were used to track progress on indicators, there were some delays in collecting the relevant information from all parties. The DGESS, steering committee reviews, independent verification, and the MIS helped mitigate these issues over time. Labor market information on graduates could not be collected, which led the Bank to drop one of the intermediate indicators (employers satisfaction with trainees) in the first restructuring. However, two additional intermediate indicators were added (on the number of laptops purchased, and on doctoral students), which complemented the design of the project. Overall, arrangements and related instruments used for data collection were well defined. All the related financial monitoring reports, internal



and external audit reports, and environmental and social safeguards reports were submitted on time, and the independent verification reports were satisfactory.

c. M&E Utilization

Data was made available regularly for the RF and were used to inform the analysis of the ICR. The MESRI used the operational MIS (CampusFaso) and routine supervision mechanisms to track outputs/outcomes, inform course corrections (including two restructurings), and manage risks. CampusFaso's operationalization enabled timely data collection and management across the higher education system, improving consistency and use of data in supervision and reporting. Appropriate outcome data for the project were used to track progress throughout implementation. The use of this system also enabled stakeholders to be aware of project progress, as these data were used for strategic planning in the sector. The World Bank's Implementation Status and Results Reports (ISRs) consistently rated M&E Satisfactory, noting that data were used to adjust implementation and to document results. Finally, the IVA verified the achievement of all the DLIs that were successfully achieved. The results collected through the M&E system of the project also are used to inform the preparation of the pipeline project ELEVATE Burkina, P509941.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified as Category 'B' partial assessment and triggered three safeguards policies: OP/BP 4.01—Environmental Assessment; OP/BP 4.11—Physical Cultural Resources; and OP/BP 4.12—Involuntary Resettlement because of the potential adverse environmental and social impacts associated with the creation of technological infrastructure and platform, rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, and construction of new infrastructure in urban areas, which were generally less adverse, small-scale, and site specific, thus manageable to an acceptable level. An environmental assessment was carried out during project preparation, which led to the development of an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), an Environment and Social Impact Assessment (*Etude d'Impact Environnemental et Social*, ESIA), and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). The ESMF, ESIA, and RPF were disclosed on time in the country on May 15, 2018, and on the World Bank's website on May 18, 2018. In addition, the government team had also prepared two Notices of Environment and Social Impact that were disclosed in-country and on the World Bank's website on May 21, 2018. The TTL confirmed that all Bank policies and procedures for safeguards were complied with (IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025). Throughout 2023 and 2024, the project maintained a Moderately Satisfactory rating for Safeguards.

The project had adequate safeguards capacity within the MESRI, with a full-time social and environmental safeguard specialist who followed implementation closely and updated the World Bank's safeguards team regularly. The project successfully established a functional grievance redress mechanism (GRM) and developed a complaint management mechanism with the aim of putting in place standards and procedures to manage project-related claims and minimizing all social risks associated with the project. The safeguards



team reported regularly on the GRM activities. The GRM project actors and committees were trained and sensitized on the issues of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment as well as on the handling of sensitive complaints. The GRM action plan and the gender-based violence action plan were fully operational. By closing, the project received 28 complaints, all of which were resolved. By the time of closure, no complaints remained unaddressed.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management. The FM arrangements were adequate, and the FM performance rating remained Moderately Satisfactory or Satisfactory throughout the life of the project. All Bank policies and procedures were followed regarding FM (IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025). The FM arrangements enabled adequate management of the project. This included regularly held steering committee meetings that reviewed annual work programs with minutes that were shared with the World Bank team. In addition, there was an internal auditor that conducted internal audit missions and regular checks and timely preparation of quarterly audit reports as well as submission of satisfactory interim financial reports. There were six external audits carried out annually, and they were unqualified (clean), and the final audit will be submitted as required. By the end of the project grace period, US\$66.7 million equivalent had been disbursed of the original US\$70.0 million equivalent. Approximately US\$169,150 equivalent was undisbursed and returned to the World Bank. There were approximately US\$3.3 million equivalent in US\$:SDR exchange rate losses.

Procurement. The World Bank's procurement team conducted regular implementation support missions and found project performance to be Moderately Satisfactory overall with three exceptions: June 2019, September 2022, and June 2023 procurement risk assessments, which rated procurement as Satisfactory. All Bank policies and procedures were followed regarding procurement (IEG TTL Interview, 30 October, 2025). The upgrades reflected the establishment of a functional procurement unit headed by an experienced procurement officer. Under the project, the procurement unit followed the World Bank's procurement regulation, and no major issues were identified during the implementation support missions. Post-procurement reviews were conducted in line with the project design. While in some instances, issues were observed, such as poor filing of procurement documentation and delays in signing awarded contracts, the Government addressed these by implementing recommendations made by the World Bank procurement team to reduce procurement risks. The performance of procurement activities was further improved with efforts made to regularly update procurement activities in Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP), particularly those awarded under the PBCs of the universities, and hold regular coordination and monitoring meetings to speed up the production of terms of reference and specifications by beneficiaries. By the project closing, the World Bank team continued to provide technical support to the MESRI to ensure that the remaining major activities were completed and all procurement and contract execution documents were archived in STEP.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None noted



d. Other

As noted in ICR (para 46), the project contributed to the broader strategic reforms of the higher education sector. The Government of Burkina Faso has prepared a white paper on higher education that consolidated achievements and lessons from PAES. The white paper set a medium-term reform agenda for higher education. The lessons from PAES, as documented in the White Paper, are being integrated by the Government in the design of the pipeline project ‘Enhancing Learning, Excellence, and Innovation in Tertiary Education in Burkina Faso (ELEVATE Burkina, P509941)’—which is currently under discussion, with delivery tentatively scheduled for FY27.

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

12. Lessons

The ICR contains several important lessons, lightly edited by IEG:

Performance-based conditions (formerly DLIs) and PBCs can enhance the culture of accountability in the higher education sector, despite the low resource setting. The project used DLIs to make the paradigm shift from an input-oriented system to a results-oriented system. The use of PBCs within the project proved to be an important mechanism for the HEIs to negotiate annual budgets based on targets and results. With strong client ownership, the PBCs help to drive project impact and improve dialogue and transparency, while shifting the monitoring system improvement from the HEI level to the national level. Institutional autonomy and transparency were key enablers of effective reform implementation within the project as it strengthened HEI capacity to implement reforms and deliver results.

The realization of objectives of a development operation in a fragile country context is facilitated by flexibility during implementation. The Government and the World Bank implementation teams responded quickly and continuously to the realities on the ground in Burkina Faso as they faced crises related to COVID-19 and conflict that led to constant government reshuffles. Thanks to the results orientation of the project, the government and institutions had some flexibility in project implementation as well. With the 2023 restructuring, the project adjusted interventions to accommodate HEI closures and the need for remote learning. Similarly, in other fragile contexts, adapting project interventions to the evolving contexts can maintain a focus on results.



Specific interventions directly targeting women can be instrumental in improving their access to higher education as well as retention. The project provided strong support for women through the inclusion of a crèche facility for mothers which allowed women to continue their education at the UJKZ. Also, robust community outreach to encourage women to enroll in higher education was supported under the project. There was also demand-side support for women through the provision of subsidized computers allowing women to participate remotely as well as scholarship support for women to enter PhD programs, all important design features to improve women’s participation and completion of HEI study programs.

Maintaining a focus on objectives is enhanced by the development of a meaningful framework of a national strategy combined with institutional capacity, especially in the context of fragility. The project team was able to leverage the strategy to ensure focus in the delivery of project interventions, especially thanks to its focus on digital tools. The project supported the Government’s strategy, and supported the necessary capacity development to expand access through the establishment of the UVBF. A strong focus on digital tools in the strategy also supported resilience to the Covid-19 pandemic, by enabling digitization of courses, Wi-Fi connectivity, digital open spaces for virtual learning, and provision of individual computers to students. The use of the strategy in this way, while building capacity in key institutions helped ensure learning continuity in the fragile setting of the country.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The quality of the ICR was Substantial. The narrative was to the point, there was a good selection of evidence, with triangulation with data from project supervision, there was a clear line of sight from the TOC through the results, there was a clear results orientation throughout the narrative. The ICR was also straightforward about the challenges faced in the project design and implementation. Some noteworthy issues were a lack of discussion on whether targets were set at an appropriate level, lesson formulation was a little underdeveloped, there was an error in the extension-time in the efficiency section, and an attribution error of one of the outcomes to the right objective. The ICR was consistent with the guidelines and concise.

- a. Quality of ICR Rating**
Substantial

